GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
LAW AND JUSTICE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:703
ANSWERED ON:05.12.2003
ELECTORAL REFORMS
IQBAL AHMED SARADGI

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have convened an all party meetmg in October, 2003 to evolve a consensus on a four-point agenda involving electoral reforms, including an enhancement in the security deposit for independent candidates and Election Commission`s demand for financial autonomy;

(b) if so, whether there has been a unanimous opinion on these issues;

(c) whether any concrete fonnula has been evolved after the meeting; and

(d) if so, the time by which electoral reforms are likely to be introduced?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE FOR LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI P.C. THOMAS)

(a) Yes, Sir. The followlDg four issues were discussed in the all-party meeting convened by the Government on 29.10.2003:-

(i) The system of open ballot for the elections to the Council of States.

(ii) Amendment of the Constitution to confer upon the Election Commissioners the same protection in the matter of removal from office as is available to the Chief Election Commissioner.

(iii) Enactment of a legislation to provide that the salaries, allowances and pension payable to the Election Commissioners and the adnrinistrative expenses of the Election Commission shall be charged on the Consolidated Fund of India.

(iv) Enhancement of the security deposit for contesting Parliamentary and Assembly elections.

(b) No, Sir. There was broad consensus, however, on the issue of introducing the system of open ballot for elections to the Council of States, with regard to incorporating suitable provisions in the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 to authorize the political parties (either through the concerned candidates or election agents or otherwise) to inspect ballot papers of their respective members while being put in the ballot box and also within the specified period, after the counting is over.

(c) and (d) The Government has decided in favor of introducing open ballot system in the election to the Council of States. As regards other issues, they may be discussed by the Government with political parties at an appropriate thne as part of the process of refoTln of electoral laws. It is, however, a continuous and ongoing process and no time frame can be suggested in this regard.